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Quality Of The Teacher-Child Relationship And Self-Worth In Middle-Childhood

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QUALITY OF THE TEACHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AND SELF-WORTH IN MIDDLE-CHILDHOOD

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Quality of the Teacher-Child Relationship and Self-Worth in Middle Childhood

BY

Hannah Ozier

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Abstract

The quality of the teacher-child relationship has been described as having implications for the social, emotional, and cognitive development of children, in addition to future school-related outcomes, such as school adjustment and performance (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Previous research has focused on children in preschool or kindergarten. The purpose of the present study was to provide information about the teacher-child relationship in middle childhood by examining factors attributed to influencing the relationship. Teachers' perceptions of their relationship with students, measured by the Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS), was compared to factors such as sex of the child and the student's perceptions of self-worth, as measured by Global Self-Worth (GSW) on the Harter Self-Perception Profile. Results indicated that scores on the STRS total scores were significantly higher for girls (M=73.25, SD=25.45) than for boys (M=50.38, SD=31.50), $t(43) = -2.69$, $p = .01$. Although other results were not significant, this study supports previous research about teacher's perceptions of boy and girl students.

Quality of the Teacher-Child Relationship and Self-Worth in Middle Childhood

The purpose of the present study was to provide information about the dynamic of the teacher-child relationship in middle childhood by examining factors attributed to influencing the relationship. The classroom teacher is a preeminent influence in the child's primary school environment. Many studies in the past have focused on children's relationships with peers within the classroom; however, much less is known about the teacher-child relationship (Birch & Ladd, 1998). The quality of the teacher-child relationship has drawn recent attention due to research suggesting that this relationship in early years (preschool/kindergarten) may have implications for the child's social, emotional, and cognitive development, in addition to future school-related outcomes, such as school adjustment and performance (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). With regard to the same age group, previous research indicated that children with conflictual or negative relationships with teachers were at risk for poor academic achievement, less likely to display independent behavior, and were more likely to avoid or not like school (Birch & Ladd, 1997). On the other hand, when the teacher-child relationship was close or positive, children were more apt to like school. In addition, this positive relationship has the potential to help children who might be at risk for difficulties in school succeed academically (Baker, 1999). Also, Howes and colleagues (1994) found that preschool children were more accepting of their peers when the teacher responded positively to a child, indicating that the teacher-child relationship influences the way in which peers perceive other children within this particular age group.

The child's behavior is also believed to have a profound influence on the teacher-child relationship. Birch and Ladd (1998) suggested that the relationship developed

between the teacher and child in early years also influences children's successive behavioral adjustment throughout their school careers. Problem behaviors, especially aggression and/or conduct problems, are associated with a more negative teacher-child relationship in kindergarten and early years of school (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). Previous research has focused on the teacher-child relationship based on behavior, mainly aggression, which has been found to be one of the best predictors of a negative or conflictual teacher-child relationship (Birch & Ladd, 1998). However, some research points to the importance of self-esteem and behavior, suggesting that low self-esteem is related to deviant or problem behavior, while positive or high self-worth has been described as a "buffer" against problem behaviors and in some cases, an indicator of academic achievement (Lent & Figueira-McDonough, 2002). Moreover, low self-esteem is believed to be rooted in childhood and over time contributes to problematic behavior surfacing in adolescence (Buka & Earls, 1993).

Research conducted by Harter (1990 as cited in 1999) suggested that although children in early childhood (ages three to four) cannot cognitively or verbally form a general sense of self-worth, they do indeed manifest self-esteem through behavior. According to this study, preschool children displayed positive self-esteem through confidence, curiosity, initiative, and independence in tasks. Children not displaying these characteristics were identified as having low self-esteem. Harter's (1999) research also suggested that children have the ability to form an overall concept of self-worth for the first time beginning in middle childhood (ages eight to eleven). Other research claims that self-esteem at this age is a predictor of resilience throughout the child's life (Muijs, 1997; Daniels, 1998).

According to Harter (1999) typical children in middle childhood begin to describe themselves by their competencies across varied domains such as cognitive, social, and behavioral. These self-evaluations of competencies include comparing oneself in relation to peers' competencies. Furthermore, Harter (1999) explained that children in middle to late childhood have the ability to make "higher-order generalizations," meaning they integrate specific concepts about themselves to form more general concepts. For example, a child may determine that he or she is competent in the academic or cognitive domain but less competent in the social domain. Additionally, according to Harter (1999), children at this age are able to determine that their self-evaluations are "situation specific." Therefore, children in middle to late childhood are able to see themselves as "smart" in certain situations and "dumb" in others; their self-evaluations are more differentiated than previously. Harter (1999) suggests that the presence of this ability to form higher-order generalizations leads the child to develop an overall self-worth or global self-worth across domains.

In the aforementioned typical middle childhood self-description, children's negative or positive self-evaluations were influenced by their perceived success or failure in domains (such as cognitive, social, and behavioral) they deemed important. In other words, if the student was unsuccessful in an area that was of little importance to him or her, then it would not have a negative impact on his or her global self-worth. However, if the child did poorly in an area which was considered important to the child, then his or her global self-worth was negatively influenced. In addition, Harter (1999) applied the symbolic interactionist theory to the construction of children's self-evaluations noting that throughout child development children first imitate the behavior of significant others,

then begin to modify their behavior to gain the approval of others. In middle childhood, children also may take the perceptions they believe others have of them and use these perceptions to define their self-evaluations.

Factors Influencing the Teacher-Child Relationship

Some factors that influence the teacher-child relationship seem to be early childhood relationships with an adult caregiver, sex of the child, sex congruence between the child and the teacher and the child. The quality of the teacher-child relationship, as previously stated, has implications for many aspects of the child's development and success in school. Much of the research in this area has focused on preschool and kindergarten children and was based on the theory of attachment set forth by Bowlby (1982). This theory suggests that children form unique internal working models of their social experiences based on the early interactions they have with adult caregivers. As applied to the teacher-child relationship, this theory implies that children use the relationships formed with their teachers to organize their experiences within the school. Therefore, children who initially form a warm or secure teacher-child relationship are able to use their teachers as a secure base at school or a resource with which to engage in activities or become involved in relationships with peers (Howes, 1999). Colwell & Lindsay (2003) suggested that the quality of the teacher-child relationship may also influence the child's self-perception in early childhood. Secure attachments with the child's primary caregiver in infancy have been associated with high self-esteem, more sociability, and less aggressive behavior in early childhood, while children with less secure (insecure) attachments may have low self-esteem, appear less socially competent, and more aggressive (Sroufe as cited in Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Since research has

shown that the teacher-child relationship appears to have such a great influence in early childhood, it is reasonable to describe this relationship as similar to that of the primary caregiver.

As mentioned previously, the symbolic interactionist theory has been used to describe how the self is developed. Likewise, Harter (1999) applies this theory to the construction of the self by stating that children in early childhood begin by imitating the behavior and values of caretakers. Next the child, throughout development, modifies his or her behavior to meet the approval of important social agents and finally embraces the opinions that he or she perceives significant others have for him or her. In other words, the way in which children feel others perceive them may influence the way they think about themselves. As noted before, the teacher-child relationship in early childhood influences peers' perceptions and behaviors indicative of self-worth/self-esteem. In other words, the way in which the teacher views the student may impact the way peers view the student. In middle childhood, self-worth or self-esteem becomes more differentiated and defined to a greater extent in relation to others, both adults and peers. By middle childhood, self-esteem may predict the teacher-child relationship as well as continue to be influenced by that relationship.

Sex is defined as the classification of the child as a boy or girl. Differences in sex have been found to impact the quantity and quality of the teacher-child relationship (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Colwell & Lindsay, 2003). In a study of preschoolers, Colwell and Lindsay (2003) found that girls spent more time with teachers, were more cooperative, and displayed more positive emotion with teachers than boys, which was consistent with other research involving sex differences and the teacher-child relationship. However,

there is some research indicating that girls in middle to late childhood reportedly received more negative feedback in the classroom than boys (as cited in Harter, 1999).

In addition, it is reported that girls have more close and dependent teacher-child relationships, tend to be more prosocial and less confrontational than boys who are more likely to be aggressive, confrontational and have more conflictual relationships with teachers (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Colwell & Lindsay, 2003). Furthermore, Birch & Ladd (1997, 1998) found that girls were rated higher than boys by their teachers in cooperative participation. Teachers also reported having closer relationships and less conflict with girls than with boys. Also, differences in sex have been found in relation to self-esteem with preschool children and the quality of the teacher-child relationship as noted in the later discussion of self-esteem as a factor (Colwell & Lindsay, 2003).

Sex congruence, as defined in this study, occurs when the sex of the teacher and child are the same. It has been suggested that sex congruence may be associated with the teacher's perceptions of a student (Ehrenberg et. al, 1995). In other words, female teachers may report more positive relationships with female students than with male students, and male teachers may report more positive relationships with male students than female students. Fewer male teachers in the elementary grades has prevented research in this area in the past, making it difficult to study their contribution to the teacher-child relationship. However, it is important to have an understanding of the quality of the relationship between male teachers and children at young ages in comparison to that of female teachers (Saft & Pianta, 2001).

In the present study, self-esteem and global self-worth are used interchangeably and defined as, "the overall evaluation of one's worth or value as a person," (Harter,

1999, p. 5). Specific domains within the self include scholastic competence, social acceptance, or physical appearance (Harter, 1999). In general, Colwell & Lindsay (2003) suggested that the quality of the child's social relationships, beginning with the attachment relationship of infancy, influences his/her self-perceptions in preschool. This was also found to be evident within the teacher-child relationships. Preschool children who had a secure or positive relationship with the teacher were more likely to show behavior indicative of positive self-esteem, while children who had a negative relationship with the teacher were more likely to show behavior indicative of negative or low self-esteem. Also, Colwell & Lindsay (2003) demonstrated that preschool boys who were cooperative with teachers had high self-esteem whereas girls showing cooperation needed to also display positive emotion in order to indicate high self-esteem. This was consistent with the research of Stuhlman & Pianta (2001) who found that when teachers were asked to write narratives about their relationships with their first grade students, compliance was often mentioned in narratives about boys as an indicator of a positive relationship. Also, the teacher expressed more positive affect in narratives about children who expressed positive affect themselves.

Few studies have examined the association of children's self-esteem and the quality of the teacher-child relationship in middle childhood. Hamre & Pianta (2001) found in a longitudinal study that early teacher relationships have an influence on the success of students through eighth grade. More specifically, when teachers perceived the kindergarten relationship with a student as high in conflict or dependency, the students were more likely to have poor academic and behavioral outcomes in eighth grade, especially for boys. As mentioned previously, if behavior is predictive of the teacher-

child relationship and self-esteem influences the child's behavior, is it possible that self-esteem in middle childhood might now predict the quality of the teacher-child relationship among students who are forming global self-evaluations for the first time?

Quality of the Teacher-Child Relationship

The teacher-child relationship, as defined in this study, is the assessment of a teacher's feelings and beliefs about his or her relationships with a student, as well as his or her feelings and beliefs about the student's behavior toward him or her (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). As mentioned before, the teacher-child relationship during preschool is influential in several aspects of the child's development and has some implications for future outcome. Most of the research that assesses the teacher-child relationship focuses on three areas: closeness, conflict, and dependency (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Closeness reflects the amount of warmth and open communication that occurs within the teacher-child relationship and is associated with positive outcomes for the child, such as school liking, classroom participation, and academic competence. Conflict reflects interactions between the teacher and students that are antagonistic and disharmonious and are associated with negative outcomes for the child, such as school avoidance, classroom disengagement, and poor academic performance. Dependency reflects the degree of dependency that the child expresses toward the teacher, such as clingy or possessive behavior. Outcomes for the dependency factor are similar to those of conflict such as poor academic performance (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

In addition, the teacher-child relationship appears to be predictive of the future behavioral adjustment of children and possibly academic outcomes. In a longitudinal study by Hamre & Pianta (2001) relational negativity in kindergarten (measured by the

teacher ratings on conflict and dependency) was associated with poor academic and behavioral outcomes in eighth grade, specifically for boys who had many behavioral problems in kindergarten. These findings give reason for further research to build an understanding of the teacher-child relationship in middle childhood.

Hypotheses

The variables under investigation in this study were the sex of the child, sex congruence, the child's self-esteem, and the teacher's perception of the teacher child relationship. It was predicted that teachers would perceive more positive relationships with girls than boys and perceive more negative relationships with boys. In addition, it was hypothesized that girls would demonstrate higher global self-esteem and more positive teacher-child relationships. Previous research by Birch & Ladd (1997, 1998) indicated that teachers rated girls more positively than boys on skills such as cooperation. Also, teachers reported less conflict and a closer relationship with girls than boys. It was also predicted that sex congruence between the teacher and child would result in a more positive relationship. Ehrenberg and colleagues (1995) suggested that sex congruence may influence the teacher's perceptions of a student. Furthermore, it was predicted that for both boys and girls, higher global self-worth would be associated with more positive teacher-child relationships.

Method

Participants

Forty-five students (21 boys, 24 girls) from the third grade, approximately eight to nine years in age, participated in the study. As well, six third grade teachers, only one of which was male, were recruited from a school in Central Illinois.

Materials

Sex of the participants was measured by self-report. For each child, there was a place provided on the self-esteem measure to indicate whether the child was a boy or girl. The sex of the teacher and the child was indicated on the teacher-child relationship form to establish the presence or absence of sex congruence.

Harter's Self-Perception Profile for Children (1985) measured Global Self-Esteem (GSW). The Self-Perception Profile is a self-report scale appropriate for the age (third grade) of children participating in this research. This measure is a 36-item scale divided into six subscales (with six items per scale). The domains encompassed by the scale include scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, behavioral conduct, and global self-worth. Since students in middle childhood are able to begin making global judgments of self worth, the global self-worth index was the focus of the present study. In addition, Harter (1999) noted that this is the area of self-worth most resistant to change; therefore it is important to understand this as early as possible for children in order to intervene.

Items on the scale are formulated as bipolar statements where the child must first decide which side he or she identifies with most. The child then reports whether this is 1 (*sort of true)* to 4 (*really true)* for him or her. Scores are summed and then averaged for each subscale, including global self-worth. An example of the items include: "Some kids often forget what they learn" but "other kids can remember things easily." The child first identifies which side is true for him or her and then rates how true the statement is to him or her. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher self-esteem while lower scores indicate lower self-esteem. According to Harter (1985) the internal reliability ranges from .71

to .86 for the subscales. In addition, Granleese & Joseph (1994) reported that over a three year period global self-worth was highly stable over time (r = .61) and more so than any of the subscales.

The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, et. al, 1995) measured the quality of the teacher-child relationship. The STRS is a 28-item rating scale, taking about five to ten minutes to complete that assesses the teacher's feelings about his or her relationship with a student as well as his or her feelings and beliefs about the students' behavior toward him or her (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The STRS is a quantitative measure designed to identify teacher-child relationships that may benefit from intervention or support (Pianta, 2001). The STRS is scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (definitely does not apply) to 5 (definitely applies). There are three qualitative factors in the scale: Closeness, Conflict, and Dependency. Teachers rated items in terms of how applicable the statements are to their relationships with a particular student. An example of an item from the Closeness subscale is, "I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child;" an item from the Conflict subscale is, "This child easily becomes angry at me;" and Dependency, "This child is overly dependent on me." High scores on the Conflict or Dependency scale typically represent a negative relationship, while a high score on Closeness would indicate a positive relationship. Raw scores and percentile ranks are determined with an overall Total score for the three subscales in which higher scores indicated a positive relationship. Hamre & Pianta (2001) report alpha coefficients ranging from .68 to .93 for the three factors. Internal consistency overall was reported at .89 (Pianta, 2001).

Procedure

At the beginning of the school year, a letter containing information about the research was sent to the assistant superintendent of a small school in Central Illinois. The letter explained the intent of the research and a request for approval for the study to be conducted in the district. A letter was received from the assistant superintendent in the school district indicating that the school wished to participate. After the receipt of the approval letter, permission letters were sent to all third grade teachers and all third grade students at the school (See Appendix A). On the teacher and parent consent forms, a space was provided for the parties to indicate whether they did or did not wish to participate. All six teachers agreed to participate in the study, only one of which was male, while 45 (or 30%) of approximately 150 students returned permission slips giving consent to participate; four permission slips were returned indicating the parents did not wish for their child to participate.

Once permission was obtained, STRS forms were hand delivered to the teachers and specific directions were provided by this researcher on how to fill out the form. Upon completion, the teacher returned the packet of forms to the researcher. This researcher administered the Self-Perception Profile for Children to small groups (three to four) of students as recommended in the examiner manual. The researcher removed three or four students from class at a time and worked at a table outside the classroom. Students were given a brief explanation of the purpose of the study (see Appendix C). After the students gave their assent to participate, this examiner read the directions aloud and provided an example item for practice on marking the answers. As the example was completed, students were allowed to ask questions or clarify the directions. When all students

indicated that they understood the directions, the researcher read each item aloud and gave students time to mark their response. When students were finished, the examiner escorted the students back to their classroom.

Results

To examine the possible differences between boys and girls relationships with their teachers, t-tests for independent means were conducted comparing the total and subscales scores from teachers' ratings on the Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) for boys and girls. As shown in Table 1, at an alpha level of .05, results indicated a significant difference in scores on the Closeness subscale for boys (M=43.05, SD=31.41) and girls (M=69.29, SD=26.57) t(43) = -3.04, p = .004. Total STRS scores were significantly higher for girls (M=73.25, SD=25.45) than for boys (M=50.38, SD=31.50), t(43) = -2.69, p = .01. There were no significant differences in STRS scores with regard to the Conflict subscale for boys (M=43.05, SD=30.13) and girls (M=30.42, SD=24.37), t(43 = 1.55), p = .13. Likewise, there were no significant differences in STRS with regard to Dependency for boys (M=43.10, SD=22.78) and girls (M=42.21, SD=31.31), t(43) = .107, p = .92.These results indicated that the teacher's did indeed report more positive relationships on the Closeness subscale and total STRS for girls (see Table 1).

When examining the possible differences in Global Self-Worth (GSW) as reported by boys and girls, a t-test for independent means was conducted on the GSW scores obtained for Harter's Self-Perception Profile (1985). The t-test indicated no significant difference in scores for boys (M=3.34, SD= .64) and girls (M=3.39, SD= .56),

$t(43) = -.28$, p .78 on GSW. Therefore, the scores reported for GSW were similar for boys and girls (see Table 1).

An analysis of the sex congruence variable could not be completed because only one of six teachers participating in the study was male.

Correlations among the students' reported GSW scores and the quality of the teacher-child relationship as measured by the STRS Total score did not indicate a significant relationship ($r = .25$). However, it was noted that for boys and girls combined, higher STRS Conflict scores were negatively correlated with STRS total scores. As well, higher Closeness scores were positively correlated with higher STRS total scores (see Table 2).

Discussion

The present study sought to examine the relationship between the child's sex, sex congruence, Global Self-Worth, and the quality of the teacher-child relationship during middle childhood. It was hypothesized that the sex of the child would be the most significant factor in relationship quality per teacher report. More specifically, it was predicted that girls would be rated more positively, and therefore receive higher scores on the STRS. This hypothesis was supported in the present study and lends support to previous studies that report sex of the child as being the most predictive factor in the quality of the teacher child relationship, especially when looking at teacher report. In this study, teachers reported more positive relationships with girls than with boys. Likewise, teachers also reported girls higher on the subscale of Closeness than boys. This finding is consistent with the previous research by Birch & Ladd (1997) and Colwell & Lindsay

(2003) who found that in early childhood ages, girls have more close and dependent teacher-child relationships.

It was also hypothesized that teachers would report more negative or conflictual relationships with male students, and this was not supported by the results of the present study. However, it is important to recall that the majority of teachers in this study were women. As Ehrenberg et. al (1995) suggested female teachers may report more positive relationships with female students than male students, therefore, sex congruence may explain these results.

As noted earlier, sex congruence was excluded from the study due to a limited male teacher participation. One male third grade teacher was employed at the school at the time of this study and readily participated; however, low student participation from his classroom did not allow analysis of this factor.

With regard to self-esteem, or GSW, the present study indicated no differences in the GSW scores of boys and girls in third grade. One explanation for these results may be due to the fact that the majority of student participants rated their GSW on the higher end of the scale. More specifically, a large majority of students (both boys and girls) indicated a GSW score of 3.0 and above on a 4.0 scales ($M = 3.36$). The limited variation in scores may have prevented a distinguishable difference to surface with regard to GSW. However, this may also suggest that during middle childhood, boys and girls, at least in this sample, have a similar and relatively high perception of self and one's self-worth. Harter (1999) described middle childhood as a transition phase where children are moving away from deriving their self-worth from what parents or caretakers project on them to the beginnings of culminating the ideas and notions of others while comparing

themselves to others. In other words, children are developing their own self-evaluations and combining those evaluations with their perceptions of others.

Another hypothesis in this study was based on the work of Lent & Figueira-McDonough (2002) and Buka & Earls (1993) who discussed the relationship of behavior and self-worth, stating that low self-esteem is believed to be rooted in childhood, and related to deviant or problem behavior that may surface in adolescence, while positive or high self-worth may guard against problem behavior. Based on this notion, it was predicted that if behavior did significantly impact self-esteem then one would expect to find those students who reported a low global self-worth to also have low scores on the STRS as rated by the classroom teacher. However, according to the present study there was not a relationship between student's GSW and teacher perception of the teacher-child relationship. Again, the insignificant findings may be due, in part, to limited variation in GSW scores.

A variety of limitations should be considered to full understand the present study. One such limitation involves a small sample size, from one school in a small Midwestern city. The minimum number of participants required to obtain statistically sound results were 50 students, preferably 25 male and 25 female, however only 45 students returned parent permission slips allowing them to participate in the study, and the 45 students were distributed unevenly among the six teachers. Small sample size does not allow for these results to be generalized to other populations. Future research should include a larger sample size, which may provide greater variation in GSW scores, as well as an even distribution of students among teachers of both sexes. Increased sample size increases the likelihood of meaningful results.

An additional factor that may have influenced the results was that some of the third grade students switch to different classrooms, and, therefore have different teachers, throughout the day for various subjects, while other teachers keep their students the entire day. The fact that some teachers have their students in class for the entire day as opposed to part of the day may influence their perceptions of the teacher-child relationship. This researcher was not aware of this factor at the initial phases of the study. Future research should use teachers and students that either stay in the same classroom all day or switch for the same subjects. It may also be of interest to compare students who switch teachers with those who do not. Likewise, it may be beneficial to compare students' perceptions of the teacher-child relationship with the teachers' perceptions of the teacher-child relationship. This would allow more depth in examining what issues are important to children during middle childhood and if or how that may relate to the teacher-child relationship.

Another limitation was related to the complexity of the format on Harter's (1985) scale, which was used to measure GSW. Based on observations, the format appeared to confuse many of the students and may have influenced the results as well. For example, the format required the students to read a statement and first choose which part (or column of the page) of the statement was most like them. Once the student selected a side, he or she was required to choose whether it was "really true," or "sort of true." The majority of the students had the most difficulty understanding the first step or deciding which column of the page to mark their answer. The examiner repeatedly explained the proper procedure for marking responses and answered several questions asked by the participants after going through the example. However it was possible that

misunderstanding by the participants may have influenced the scores. Future research should consider other measures of self-worth and related factors for eight year-olds rather than basing the GSW on a single score.

A last limitation to the study involves the fact that the measures obtained in this study involved self-report. Self-report measures require the participant to recall information from the past and, in this particular study participants were asked to report personal feelings about themselves and others. These types of measures should be used with caution. Both Harter's (1985) measure of global self-worth as well as the STRS involve self-report and may, therefore, reveal some type of inaccuracy. More specifically, student participants were asked to fill out Harter's Self-Perception Profile (1985) in groups of three or four students as recommended in the manual so that the directions could be thoroughly explained and each item could be read aloud. However, the mere presence of other students or the researcher may have influenced the students' responses. The STRS also required the teachers to report their perceptions of the relationship with each student. It is possible that some teachers may have reported scores in the middle ranges rather than the extreme ranges because they did not want to report poor relationships with students. On the other hand, teachers may have reported more positive relationships than truly exist.

Although the results of the present study did not support the relationship between self-worth and the teacher-child relationship, it did, however, support the findings of previous research indicating that teachers report more positive and closer relationships with girls than boys. Whether this difference has any implications for social, emotional,

or academic performance may be the subject of future research in addition to examining students' grades and peers relationships.

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Table 1

Summary of T-Test Analyses Comparing Boys & Girls Scores on STRS & GSW

	Male Students (n = 21)		Female Students (n = 24)		t (*df* = 43)	*p*
	M	SD	M	SD		
STRS Total Score (0-100)	50.38	31.50	73.25	25.45	-2.69	.01
STRS Conflict (12-60)	43.05	30.13	30.42	24.37	1.55	.13
STRS Closeness (11-55)	43.05	31.41	69.29	26.57	-3.04	.004
STRS Dependency (5-25)	43.10	22.78	42.21	31.31	.12	.92
Harter's GSW (1-4)	3.34	.64	3.39	.56	-.28	.78

Note: Possible ranges of scores are in parentheses.

Table 2

Summary of Correlations for Boys and Girls Combined on GSW & STRS Scales (n = 45)

	STRS Total	Conflict	Closeness	Dependency	GSW
STRS Total	--	-.86**	.80**	-.21	.25
Conflict	--	--	-.64**	.16	-.11
Closeness	--	--	--	.14	.24
Dependency	--	--	--	--	.15
Harter's Global Self-Worth	--	--	--	--	--

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Appendix A: Sample Parent Consent Form

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Greetings, I am currently serving as the school psychologist intern at xxxxx Elementary School under the supervision of Xxxxx Xxxxxx, Nationally Certified School Psychologist for the xxxxxx Community Unit School District #x. As required by the school psychology program at Eastern Illinois University, I must complete a thesis in order to receive my specialist's degree.

Throughout my graduate coursework, I was involved in a number of classrooms and over time, developed an interest in the relationship between teacher and student. Therefore, I have decided to research this relationship by collecting information from the third grade students and their classroom teachers at xxxxxx Elementary School. This study will provide information about the quality of the teacher-child relationship for students in middle childhood by assessing factors that have been previously described as contributing to this relationship. There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study nor are there are direct benefits at the time of the study.

In order to complete this project, I need your help! This letter is a request for permission that would allow your child to complete a short questionnaire (The Self-Perception Profile) and allow your child's teacher to complete the Student Teacher Relationship Scale for your child. As well, I need your permission to review your child's temporary school file, which does not include grades or test scores. Please know that the study only requires your child to fill out a short questionnaire (taking approximately 15-30 minutes) and all information obtained will be held confidential. Students will be assigned a code number and no names or identifying information will be used. Records obtained in this study will be secured in a locked office. Information from participants who withdraw from the study will be destroyed immediately. After completion of the study all data will be stored in the files of this researcher for the minimum requirement of three years, after which these files will also be destroyed. Upon completion of the study, the results will be shared with my professors at EIU and the administration at xxxxx Elementary School. Please note that your child's information will not be collected or used in the analysis without your permission. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time if you choose to do so. Copies of the questionnaires used will be made available to view at xxxxx Elementary School if you choose to do so.

Please complete the bottom portion of this page, indicating whether you wish (or do not wish) for your child to participate in this study and return to your child's classroom teacher. Thank you for your cooperation in advance. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx. In addition, you may contact my site supervisor, Xxxxx Xxxxxx at xxx-xxx-xxxx, or my EIU supervisor Dr. Christine McCormick, xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Respectfully,

Hannah Ozier
School Psychologist Intern
xxxxx Elementary School

____ Yes, my child may participate ____ No, my child may not participate

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Student's Name _____ Phone Number _____

Appendix B: Sample Teacher Consent Form

Dear Third Grade Teachers,

Greetings, I am currently serving as the school psychologist intern at xxxxx Elementary School under the supervision of Xxxxxx Xxxxxx, Nationally Certified School Psychologist for the xxxxx Community Unit School District #x. As required by the school psychology program at Eastern Illinois University, I must complete a thesis in order to receive my specialist's degree.

Throughout my graduate coursework, I was involved in a number of classrooms and over time, developed an interest in the relationship between teacher and student. Therefore, I have decided to research this relationship by collecting information from the third grade students and their classroom teachers here at xxxxx Elementary School. This study will provide information about the quality of the teacher-child relationship for students in middle childhood by assessing factors that have been previously described as contributing to this relationship. There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study nor are there are direct benefits at the time of the study. However, the results of this study may give direction for future research in this area.

In order to complete this project, I need your help! This letter is a request for permission that would allow you to complete the Student Teacher Relationship Scale for the participating students in your classroom. Please know that the study only requires you to fill out a short questionnaire and all information obtained will be held confidential. The questionnaire will take approximately 5-10 minutes to fill out for each participating student. Students will be assigned a code number and no names or identifying information will be used. Upon completion of the study, the results will be shared with my professors at EIU and the administration at xxxxx Elementary School. Please note that your information will not be collected or used in the analysis without your permission. Your participation in this study is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time if you choose to do so. Records obtained in this study will be secured in a locked office. Information from participants who withdraw from the study will be destroyed immediately. After completion of the study all data will be stored in the files of this researcher for the minimum requirement of three years, after which these files will also be destroyed.

Please complete the bottom portion of this page, indicating whether you wish (or do not wish) to participate in this study and return to me. Thank you for your cooperation in advance. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx. In addition, you may contact my site supervisor, Xxxxx Xxxxx at xxx-xxx-xxxx, or my EIU supervisor Dr. Christine McCormick, xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Respectfully,

Hannah Ozier
School Psychologist Intern
xxxxx Elementary School

____ Yes, I will participate ____ No, I will not participate

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C: Sample Script for Student Assent

Hello (name of child), my name is Ms. Ozier and I work with all kinds of students. I am actually a student myself.

Part of my work as a student includes doing a project. I am interested in third graders and how they think/feel about themselves. I am also interested in how third grade teachers think/feel about their students.

I am talking with you today because I want to know if you would like to help me finish my project. To help me out, I would read you some questions and you can answer them with how you think or feel. Your name will not be on the paper and no one will know what you say (including your teachers/parents). All I ask is that you be very honest with your answers.

If you would like to help me with this project, please say yes. If you would not like to help me, you can tell me no.

If you say yes and for some reason change your mind that is okay as well; just let me know.

Thank you for helping me out OR thank you for listening to me today.

Appendix D: Student-Teacher Relationship Scale

STRS Student-Teacher Relationship Scale™ Response Form

Teacher's name _____ Gender: M F Ethnicity _____ Date ___/___/___

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Gender: M F Ethnicity _____ Age _____

Please reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with this child. Using the point scale below, CIRCLE the appropriate number for each item. If you need to change your answer, DO NOT ERASE! Make an X through the incorrect answer and circle the correct answer.

1 Definitely does not apply	2 Does not really apply	3 Neutral, not sure	4 Applies somewhat	5 Definitely applies

1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child.	1	2	3	4	5
2. This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
3. If upset, this child will seek comfort from me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. This child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me.	1	2	3	4	5
5. This child values his/her relationship with me.	1	2	3	4	5
6. This child appears hurt or embarrassed when I correct him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
7. When I praise this child, he/she beams with pride.	1	2	3	4	5
8. This child reacts strongly to separation from me.	1	2	3	4	5
9. This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself.	1	2	3	4	5
10. This child is overly dependent on me.	1	2	3	4	5
11. This child easily becomes angry with me.	1	2	3	4	5
12. This child tries to please me.	1	2	3	4	5
13. This child feels that I treat him/her unfairly.	1	2	3	4	5
14. This child asks for my help when he/she really does not need help.	1	2	3	4	5
15. It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
16. This child sees me as a source of punishment and criticism.	1	2	3	4	5
17. This child expresses hurt or jealousy when I spend time with other children.	1	2	3	4	5
18. This child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined.	1	2	3	4	5
19. When this child is misbehaving, he/she responds well to my look or tone of voice.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Dealing with this child drains my energy.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I've noticed this child copying my behavior or ways of doing things.	1	2	3	4	5
22. When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day.	1	2	3	4	5
23. This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Despite my best efforts, I'm uncomfortable with how this child and I get along.	1	2	3	4	5
25. This child whines or cries when he/she wants something from me.	1	2	3	4	5
26. This child is sneaky or manipulative with me.	1	2	3	4	5
27. This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me.	1	2	3	4	5
28. My interactions with this child make me feel effective and confident.	1	2	3	4	5

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Appendix E: Harter's Self-Perception Profile for Children

What I Am Like

Name _____ Age _____ Birthday _____ Group _____
Month Day

Boy or Girl (circle which)

SAMPLE SENTENCE

	Really True for me	Sort of True for me				Sort of True for me	Really True for me
(a)	☐	☐	Some kids would rather play outdoors in their spare time	BUT	Other kids would rather watch T.V.	☐	☐
1.	☐	☐	Some kids feel that they are very *good* at their school work	BUT	Other kids *worry* about whether they can do the school work assigned to them.	☐	☐
2.	☐	☐	Some kids find it *hard* to make friends	BUT	Other kids find it's pretty *easy* to make friends.	☐	☐
3.	☐	☐	Some kids do very *well* at all kinds of sports	BUT	Other kids *don't* feel that they are very good when it comes to sports.	☐	☐
4.	☐	☐	Some kids are *happy* with the way they look	BUT	Other kids are *not* happy with the way they look.	☐	☐
5.	☐	☐	Some kids often do *not* like the way they *behave*	BUT	Other kids usually *like* the way they behave.	☐	☐
6.	☐	☐	Some kids are often *unhappy* with themselves	BUT	Other kids are pretty *pleased* with themselves.	☐	☐
7.	☐	☐	Some kids feel like they are *just as smart* as as other kids their age	BUT	Other kids aren't so sure and *wonder* if they are as smart.	☐	☐
8.	☐	☐	Some kids have *alot* of friends	BUT	Other kids *don't* have very many friends.	☐	☐

	Really True for me	Sort of True for me				Sort of True for me	Really True for me
9.	☐	☐	Some kids wish they could be alot better at sports	BUT	Other kids feel they are good enough at sports.	☐	☐
10.	☐	☐	Some kids are *happy* with their height and weight	BUT	Other kids wish their height or weight were *different.*	☐	☐
11.	☐	☐	Some kids usually do the *right* thing	BUT	Other kids often *don't* do the right thing.	☐	☐
12.	☐	☐	Some kids *don't* like the way they are leading their life	BUT	Other kids *do* like the way they are leading their life.	☐	☐
13.	☐	☐	Some kids are pretty *slow* in finishing their school work	BUT	Other kids can do their school work *quickly.*	☐	☐
14.	☐	☐	Some kids would like to have alot more friends	BUT	Other kids have as many friends as they want.	☐	☐
15.	☐	☐	Some kids think they could do well at just about any new sports activity they haven't tried before	BUT	Other kids are afraid they might *not* do well at sports they haven't ever tried.	☐	☐
16.	☐	☐	Some kids wish their body was *different*	BUT	Other kids *like* their body the way it is.	☐	☐
17.	☐	☐	Some kids usually *act* the way they know they are *supposed* to	BUT	Other kids often *don't* act the way they are supposed to.	☐	☐
18.	☐	☐	Some kids are *happy* with themselves as a person	BUT	Other kids are often *not* happy with themselves.	☐	☐
19.	☐	☐	Some kids often *forget* what they learn	BUT	Other kids can remember things *easily.*	☐	☐
20.	☐	☐	Some kids are always doing things with *alot* of kids	BUT	Other kids usually do things *by themselves.*	☐	☐

	Really True for me	Sort of True for me				Sort of True for me	Really True for me
21.	☐	☐	Some kids feel that they are *better* than others their age at sports	BUT	Other kids *don't* feel they can play as well.	☐	☐
22.	☐	☐	Some kids wish their physical appearance (how they look) was *different*	BUT	Other kids *like* their physical appearance the way it is.	☐	☐
23.	☐	☐	Some kids usually get in *trouble* because of things they do	BUT	Other kids usually *don't* do things that get them in trouble.	☐	☐
24.	☐	☐	Some kids *like* the kind of *person* they are	BUT	Other kids often wish they were someone else.	☐	☐
25.	☐	☐	Some kids do *very well* at their classwork	BUT	Other kids *don't* do very well at their classwork.	☐	☐
26.	☐	☐	Some kids wish that more people their age liked them	BUT	Other kids feel that most people their age *do* like them.	☐	☐
27.	☐	☐	In games and sports some kids usually *watch* instead of play	BUT	Other kids usually *play* rather than just watch.	☐	☐
28.	☐	☐	Some kids wish something about their face or hair looked *different*	BUT	Other kids *like* their face and hair the way they are.	☐	☐
29.	☐	☐	Some kids do things they know they *shouldn't* do	BUT	Other kids *hardly ever* do things they know they shouldn't do.	☐	☐
30.	☐	☐	Some kids are very *happy* being the way they are	BUT	Other kids wish they were *different*.	☐	☐
31.	☐	☐	Some kids have *trouble* figuring out the answers in school	BUT	Other kids almost *always* can figure out the answers.	☐	☐
32.	☐	☐	Some kids are *popular* with others their age	BUT	Other kids are *not* very popular.	☐	☐

	Really True for me	Sort of True for me				Sort of True for me	Really True for me
33.	☐	☐	Some kids *don't* do well at new outdoor games	BUT	Other kids are *good* at new games right away.	☐	☐
34.	☐	☐	Some kids think that they are good looking	BUT	Other kids think that they are not very good looking.	☐	☐
35.	☐	☐	Some kids behave themselves very well	BUT	Other kids often find it hard to behave themselves.	☐	☐
36.	☐	☐	Some kids *are* not very happy with the way they do alot of things	BUT	Other kids think the way they do things is *fine*.	☐	☐